

Romans 16

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Romans. I'm excited. This morning we finish the book of Romans. We're going to be in Romans 16, reading the entire chapter. We will be finishing the book of Romans.

We've been in it for some time now. I am almost as excited about finishing the book of Romans, not because I just want to be through with it, just because that is another step of completion the Lord has allowed us to get to.

As I am excited about the series, we'll start next month going into July. It will probably be a four or five part series and I want to encourage you to be a part of it. It will be a wonderful time in the Lord, I believe.

But today we are in Romans 16 as we bring the book of Romans to a conclusion. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read Romans 16.

A lot of names, a lot of city locations in here, so you'll have to be gracious to me and overlook a little bit of my southern dialect as we read through the word of God.

[1 : 02] Paul writes to the church at Rome. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Syncria, that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, that you help her in whatever matters she may have need of you.

For she herself has also been a helper of many and of myself as well. Greet Prissa and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risk their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Eponatus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

Greet Andronicus and Junius, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Ampelatus, my beloved in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ. And Stichus, my beloved. Greet Apellas, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Astrobulus. Greet Herodion, my kinsmen.

[2 : 08] Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphenia and Tryphosia, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. Greet Asencretus, Phlegon, Hermes, Petrobust, Hermas, and the brethren with them.

Greet Philologus and Julia, Neresus and his sister, and Olympus, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you have learned. And turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ, but of their own appetites.

And by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all. Therefore I am rejoicing over you. But I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

[3 : 11] The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you. And so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

I, Tertus, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you. And Quartus, the brother.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the scripture of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we rejoice in every opportunity we have to praise you in song and to praise you in fellowship.

Lord, now as we come to a time of praising you through the reading and understanding of your word, we pray that it would take hold of our hearts and minds. God, we ask that you would help us to understand you in a greater way.

[4 : 24] And Lord, not only to understand you, but to fall in love with you over and over again. We thank you for the opportunity, and we pray that there would be no hindrance, no cause for stumbling. But Lord, that your word would speak to us clearly, and your people would be able to respond obediently.

Lord, we ask that you would lead us through the remainder of this time, and we ask it in the sweet name of Jesus. Amen. You may be seated. As we bring the book of Romans to a close, and we have been looking at the foundational doctrines of our faith, we have been looking at the big issues, if you will.

We've looked at the great truths of salvation. Justification by faith alone is the way it has been put throughout the ages. That we are saved and redeemed not because of the works we do, not because of the actions we take, but we are saved because of the work which he has accomplished.

And it is our faith in Christ that brings about salvation, and it is that alone. We have seen that played out in doctrines in chapters 1 through 8. We've seen how it was displayed in history in chapters 9, 10, and 11.

And we have seen how it has application in our lives in 12, 13, 14, and 15. And now we are bringing the book to a close, and we are looking at this great truth, that we are saved not because of what we do or how we earn it, but we are saved because of what he has done and our faith that we put in it.

[5 : 43] And that is a big difference. And now Paul begins to wrap things up. Some would say that this is not original to the author of Paul. Some would say that this is not Pauline writing, because he is writing to a church that did not know him personally.

He is writing to a church that did not understand him or would not recognize him if he walked into a room. And some say that if Paul was writing to a church which he had never been to, how in the world would he know so many people there?

How would he have so many people to write to? Well, that is to misunderstand the time and the transitory nature of people and that literally all roads lead to Rome. And as Paul had been through Asia planting churches, and these people had been moving in nature, that a number of these believers which Paul had poured himself into would have eventually made themselves to Rome and had connected to that church there at Rome.

And Paul is writing to form a common bond more than any other letter. The book of Romans includes more names than any other letter he wrote. And it is so that Paul can establish himself as one who is well known by many of the church members.

But rather than just seeing the names as names of people, I want you to see this morning the corporate body of the saints. We call it the church. And Paul is literally writing to the church with a capital C, not a church with a lowercase c.

[7 : 08] We know that the church at Rome was begun by an unknown individual. More than likely it was a layman, someone who had another job, who had went to Jerusalem at Pentecost, heard the preaching of Peter, came to faith in Christ, took that news, went back home with it, and shared it with people around them.

We know that as they heard that, they began to respond to the gospel, and all of a sudden there's a church in Rome. But we also know that the church in Rome did not have a building that it went to in one unique location, rather that the church in Rome was actually a number of churches meeting throughout the city of Rome.

And it is Paul writing this letter to those individuals, a number of what we would call house churches, and encouraging them to the reality of their salvation. And we see here how Paul is now writing to the body of Christ.

And I want you to see not only the beauty of it, but I want you to see the wonder of it, and why it is so awesome that we get to be a part of it. This morning, I want you to see the corporate body of the saints.

Number one, as we look at it, I want you to see the beauty of its universal nature. The beauty of its universal nature. One of the things that I think that we struggle with the most here in the Bible Belt, which, by the way, has become unbuckled and seems to be falling apart.

[8 : 25] One of these things that we deal with in the deep south of religion in our own nation, and it is a glorious place to live, it is a glorious place to be a part of, is that we begin to get tunnel visions, and we forget or we do not acknowledge the beauty of the universal nature of the church.

We need to understand that the bride of Christ is not made up of Southern Americans living in the deep south composed of churches throughout the community, but rather that the bride of Christ is made up, as the book of Revelation says, of people from every tribe, every tongue, every nation, and every color.

And it is a beautiful thing to behold. And Paul here, in writing this list of individuals, begins to show us the beauty of the universal body of Christ.

He is writing to the church at Rome, a metropolitan location in its own well-being, made up of all types of individuals, and he begins to commend, or he begins to write about believers from different locations.

He is writing about Phoebe from Sincrea. He writes about the first believer from Asia. He writes about the believers of the Gentiles. He's writing about believers from the Jewish people. And he begins to speak here of the universality of the church, that it is made up more than just Romans.

[9 : 40] It is made up from more than just the individuals who call Rome their home. And he is writing to the church and reminding them, you are not an isolated group of believers. And in case you haven't captured that, that is good news.

Because we have the tendency to think that the church is only what we see in our location. That the church is only composed and comprised of the individuals that we meet with regularly.

That we have the tendency to think that this is what church looks like. That this is all there is to church. And I'm just going to be honest with you. Look around the room. If this is all church looks like, we're not going to reach the world.

But the beautiful thing is, this isn't the church. This is a church, a local church, which is important. I'll get to that in just a minute. But this isn't the church. Jesus is calling to himself people from all various parts of the world.

People from all various parts of life. People from all different degrees of nationality. And it is a beautiful thing. My friend, this past week was a glorious opportunity.

[10 : 42] But I had an opportunity to fellowship with a believer from Haiti. I heard the opportunity of hearing a testimony from a lady from Asia. I heard the opportunity of fellowshiping with people who not only are across the state or across the way or across the nation, but from around the world.

And it is a glorious thing. You know why it's glorious? Because when I walked into this individual's presence, when I walked up to this man from Haiti, I looked at him and I said, Hey, my brother, how are you?

You see what Paul says? I commend to you our... Just stop right there. I commend to you our... Which he says, church at Rome, it is yours and mine. It is one thing that they have in common.

Paul would not be recognized if he had walked into the assembly of the meeting of the saints at Rome. They would have heard about him. They would have known about him, but they had never seen him. But yet Paul brings this linkage.

I commend to you our... Someone we have in common. Sister Phoebe. All of a sudden now we are united. We are not a divided body. Satan has caused great disarm among believers and putting us on isolated islands and caused us to forget the reality of the bondage and the reality of the union we have in Christ.

[12 : 04] Paul says, you don't know me. You may not have ever seen me, but I am your brother. You are my brothers and sister, and I am sending you one of our sisters who is Phoebe. And you need to treat her as a sister in Christ.

And you need to offer her everything that is due her for Christian sisterhood. You need to extend to her and help her in any way. Why is this beautiful? Because when we understand that the bride of Christ is not just one isolated group, but rather that it is a universal body, now all of a sudden we begin to break open the possibilities of what the church can do.

We begin to cast aside all of the hindrances that Satan says, you can't do that, you can't do that, you can't do this. The church, my friend, listen, is unstoppable.

Because the church literally is a universal world force. And it is comprised of believers from all around the world.

I mean, have you ever thought about this? In Christ. In Christ, you are a part of the church. In Christ, that is, in Christ, being in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 13] And when you accept him as your Lord and Savior, he makes you a member of the body. You choose to fellowship and to make your commitment and your dedication, maybe, to Ward Trace Baptist Church, and I am so thankful for that.

But in Christ, you are part of something so much bigger than that. In Christ, you are part of the bride of Christ. You are a part of the worldwide faith of Christ.

Now there are some, I want to stay balanced here, there are some that I run into who say they believe in the church universal with a capital C, and that they are a member of the church universal.

And since they are a member of the church universal, they don't ever have to be a part of the church, okay, see, local. And I tell them, every promise written in Scripture, every promise given in the New Testament is extended to a local body of believers as a local church.

So there's the balance, right? We are a part of the universal, but you cannot really be an effective part of the universal without living it out in the local because it is going to show you who you are.

[14 : 19] You are a part of the human race. But as a part of the human race, God has designed you to live at a time and space. As Paul wrote to the, spoke to the people at Athens, that God had appointed you a place to be born, a place to live, and a place to reside, even though you are a part of humanity worldwide.

It is a beautiful thing, the universal nature of the church, because it causes us to rejoice. Maybe in our location, it may be hard. Maybe in this location, it may be hard.

But over here, we begin to be encouraged by what Jesus is doing through His church. So we see, first of all, the beauty of its universal nature. Number two, now we want to balance that out. I want you to see the importance of each individual.

There's this tendency to say, well, if the church is so universal, if the church is so big and so large, then why am I important? Maybe I'll just float along. Maybe I won't have to give myself to it as much.

Maybe I can just blend in. If it's that big, I'll just blend in and I'll allow things to go on. But I want you to understand that the universal body is filled with individuals. And Paul reminds us of the importance of the individuals.

[15 : 31] I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church, a servant of the church. The word servant there is deaconess.

Now, that's going to get me in trouble, but stay with me, okay? It is the same word used when Paul writes to Timothy about the position of deacons. It is the same word, but it is in the feminine gender for deaconess.

Now, that does not mean that Phoebe held an official position within the body of Christ. It does not mean that in St. Crea, she had this official position of being a deaconess along with other deacons.

Okay? That's not what I'm trying to make a case for. I'm just saying that she was a member of a church and she didn't look around and say, oh, well, that's the deacon's job. She looked up and said, that's a job I can do.

What was she known for? The only thing we know about Phoebe is she served the church. And Paul thought her service to the church was so important.

[16 : 32] He wrote to the church at Rome and said, give her anything she wants because she's a servant of the church. Oh, that's not glorious, right? Serving is not something that is glorious.

But he says, here's Phoebe, she serves the church. She is an individual that is important. And then we meet Prisca and Aquila and we say, well, why are they back in Rome? They fled Rome under the persecution.

You remember your New Testament? They had fled Rome under the persecution. Now, evidently, they had went back to Rome, which makes all due sense because that leader would have died by this time if we take the writing of Romans at the proper time frame.

And they would have went back and he says, these are important. Why? But they are my fellow workers in the Lord. They have risked their necks. No one knows how Prisca and Aquila risked their own necks for Paul.

But he says, they gave of themselves for me and the church that meets in their house. Look at these individuals. And then we meet the first believer from Asia. We meet servants over and over and over again.

[17 : 31] And Paul is giving us individuals. People he loves not because they are part of the universal church, but because as individuals they are important in the church.

Friend, I want you to be encouraged while the church is beautiful because it is universal, the church is powerful because it's filled with individuals. There is a place and a part for each of us.

And when Christ redeems you and saves you and sets you free, when you come to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, he has something he wants you as an individual to do in his universal body called the church.

The beauty of the gospel is this, that God so loved you he gave his only begotten son so that you would not have to perish but would have everlasting life. And that in that everlasting life you would now be able to give this life for his glory, for his honor, for his sake.

You would be able to dedicate this life for his purposes, for his cause, for his good name. You would be able to dedicate this life for his work. By the way, we think that we come to Christ and we have eternal life.

[18 : 37] Have you ever thought about what you're going to be doing in all of eternity? If you read the scripture and you study your Bible you know that in eternity you will do what he commands you to do. Right? You will either be a ruler over a city or you'll be a sweeper of the streets.

And by the way, either one of them I'm content with. You will do whatever it is he commands you to do because in heaven those who do not do what he commands them to do are not there. And that's what we see there.

We see this in the millennial reign of Christ in the book of Revelations. So, how much more important now to begin to do whatever it is he commands us to do if that's what we're going to be doing for all of eternity?

It is the importance of the individual. There is a work for each individual in eternity and there is a work for each individual in time and space now. And Paul here, he shows us the importance of them.

We see them from risking their lives to serving the church to being believers and to being stand out among the apostles. We see the importance of every individual. Number three, as we begin to see the corporate body of the saints, not only do we see the beauty of its universal nature, not only do we see the importance of the individual, number three, we see the common cause for chaos in the body.

[19 : 47] The common cause for chaos in the body. You know, one thing, there is one constant throughout worldwide church activities. The church is always at war.

Christ has called us to spiritual warfare. He has not called us to comfortable living. Rather, he has called us to dedicated service. We are a part of the Lord's army. You may remember that. We have allowed our kids to sing those songs and we are soldiers marching in his army.

We have the armor of God given to us in Galatians 6. But everywhere you go throughout history and everywhere you go throughout the world, you'll find that there is always an enemy of the church and that that chaos is common and that that problem has one root cause.

This is good news. The reason this is good news is because if the same thing is happening in every church, it's a lot easier to identify what that thing is, right? The more cases you have to study, the better it is to find a cure for what's going on.

And here we begin to see it. Paul lays it out. In verse 17, Now I urge you, brethren, he's going to caution them about the problem that arises in every church.

[21 : 00] Keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances. Here's the problem. Here's the chaos. Those who want to come in and cause division. Those who want to cause the stumbling.

Those who want to cause problems. And now he is writing to a church he had never been to, but Paul is about to tell them how this will happen. And how can Paul do that? Because every other church he had written to, these same problems that happened there.

Well, how did they happen? And this gives us reason to pay attention because it helps us to understand how it could happen here. How it might happen here. How do they cause dissensions?

That is, fighting among one another. That is, this turmoil, this bickering within the body. I've never met a church that did not go through that. I've never met a church.

As a matter of fact, this past week I met with a church planter that they're not even officially a church yet. And they've already had that. How do they have dissensions? How do these things go on?

[21 : 56] How do we have these hindrances, things that keep us from doing what Christ has called us to do? Contrary to the teachings which you have learned and turn away from them. He says, Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you have learned and turn away from them.

Here we see that the root cause of all problems in church is doctrinal. I want you to hear that out. It is doctrinal. What is doctrine? Doctrine is the teaching you adhere to.

The root cause of every problem universal in the church is doctrinal. Which means it's what I really believe to be true. You say, Well, I don't know much about doctrine.

I don't really use that word. My friend, I want to tell you something. You are giving your life to some type of teaching. You are allowing something to dictate your life.

No, no, I'm not. I'm doing what I want to do. Well, that's the doctrine of Satan. Satan loves self. And he wants to teach you to be concerned about yourself. You say, Well, I'm not doing that.

[23 : 02] And you say, Well, I don't know all these things. And why is it important to understand Scripture? Because every problem that attacks every church is really founded in misapplication of truth.

You say, Oh, no, I know some people that have caused a lot of problems in that church. And I know people that cause problems. People are not the problem. The Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood.

People are not your problem. You say, Oh, you don't know the people I know. Well, you don't know the people I know. Problem is not against people. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against every spiritual force of darkness in the places of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That's doctrinal. Now we have moved from personal to doctrinal, right? If we could get people to have right doctrine, that is right truth and right teaching, then we wouldn't have a problem. The problem is that we all, at times, misapply truth.

So Paul says, Be careful what you listen to. Be careful what you allow to come in and persuade you. Why? For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ, but of their own appetites.

[24 : 10] And by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. Why is it so important to be careful what we listen to? Why is it so important to be careful what we hear?

It's because every problem found in every church is caused by what truth is being taught. It says, Why it is so important to have right doctrine?

For the report of your obedience has reached to all, therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. And now why does he say that? He said, Because all the world hears about the church at Rome.

And when the world begins to take notice of the church at Rome, my friend, listen to me, the enemy stands up and takes notice as well. And then he gives them this encouragement in verse 20. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

That seems kind of random, right? But listen, false teaching and false doctrine really has an originator and that is Satan himself. The appetite of man to be self-pleasing, self-seeking, self-satisfying and after his own pleasures is really satanic.

[25 : 12] The man who teaches things to fill himself is one who is being influenced by Satan, not of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus came and emptied himself, Satan was cast out because he tried to fill himself.

And we see this and Paul encourages him, Don't worry because the problem you have is a problem every church has. So watch out for the problem, but in the end, God's going to take care of the problem universal instantaneously.

When the head of Satan is crushed, the problems of the church fall away. That's good news because we understand here that when Satan is finally defeated in time and space, he's already been eternally defeated, but when he is finally defeated, then the problems of the church cease to exist.

So we see this common cause for every problem. we look at the corporate body of the saints and we see that it is beautiful because it's universal. We see that it is filled with important individuals.

We see that every one of those individuals have a common problem. Your problem is not other people. Your problem is not different issues. The problems are always doctrinal.

[26 : 19] It is the truth of scripture. It's why it's so important. And now we come to this final encouragement. We come to this final encouragement. I want you to see the eternal stability of the body. I want to ask you something.

What are you resting on to make certain what you believe in is really true? Because you are living out your beliefs either knowingly or unknowingly.

What you really believe is always displayed by how you really live. It is not displayed by the way we look on Sunday mornings in the pew or even Wednesday evenings in the prayer time.

It is displayed by how we live Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Our truths that we adhere to, those things that we trust in are always displayed by the actions we take in our lives.

And Paul here is encouraging the church to remind them, you have a common enemy just like every other church. That is Satan. Paul says, but there is stability to be found.

[27 : 22] There is a bedrock that the church rests upon, that the church will rise victorious, that the church will stand strong. After the greetings, and by the way, I just want to say to you that in verse 22, I, Tertius, who write this letter, does not mean Paul didn't write the letter.

As many of the letters of Paul, Paul would speak it and there would be someone transcribing it. So this is the scribe who would be writing what Paul is saying. That is why when you get to one of the letters of Paul where it says, I, Paul, myself have written this letter.

See with what large letters I have written. That doesn't mean he used big words. That means his eyesight wasn't what it should have been because of this road, the Damascus road, you know. So he had to write big letters. So he was just, that's just kind of a side note, just one of those things that we need to understand.

But look at verses 25 through 27. Here is the assurance of the stability of the church. I want to tell you, the church will not fail. I believe in the church.

I really believe in the church. I love the church of Jesus Christ. I love the bride of Christ. I believe that the church is God's answer for the world.

[28 : 32] I believe because of the church's relationship with Jesus Christ that it is God's force to use to push back the darkness of the world. I believe God wants to use the church to do things that the church does not even know that God wants it to do.

I believe the church is the answer to every problem in society. I believe the church is the answer to every cause of depravity. I believe the church is the only answer God has for humanity.

Because no one sees Christ without seeing the body of Christ. You may know of me, but you will not know about me until you see me, right? You can hear me. And the body of Christ, the only thing that God has allowed to be the representation of Christ on the face of the earth right now is the church.

I believe in the church. I believe in the church local. I believe that the local church, a part of the universal body, can be used by God to do glorious things.

And I also believe that the church will not fail. I believe that in Christ I have given myself to something not just as vocation, I'm not talking about because I'm a pastor, I mean when I came to Him through faith and I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior, I now was a part of something that could not fail.

[29 : 47] I now was a part of something that would not ever stop being. I don't know where you all work. I don't know all of your occupations. But there was a time when that thing was not in existence and there may be a time in the future where it ceases to be in existence.

Everything in this world falls apart. But the church has been God's plan from the beginning. And when we are a part of the church, we are a part of something that will not be shaken.

It will always stand. We see it from the beginning of His Word and we see it displayed at the end of His Word. And I want you to see here the eternal stability of this body.

When you get to heaven, when you get to eternity because of the faith you have put in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, not because of the works you have done, but because you have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you're going to be sitting at a wedding supper.

I don't know about you. Maybe right now as I went past 12, you're thinking more about a table than anywhere else. But it is a good thing to be thinking about the very first thing we're going to do when we get to glory is sit down and eat.

[31 : 04] And when you're sitting down and eating, you're going to be at a supper that that great groom, Jesus Christ, is offering to His bride, the church.

And He's welcoming that bride into His presence. And that bride will be eternally in His presence. I want you to see the stability here. Now to Him, now to Him, who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.

To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. How is the church secure? Look at this. Now to Him. First of all, we find its origination in Him. Who is that? That is God. The security of the church rests in God and in God alone.

And how is it established? According, look at all the recordings here. According to my gospel. Now it's not Paul saying I have my gospel and Jesus has His gospel. No, His gospel was the gospel, the good news. Here it is.

It is according to the gospel, according to the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery. What is that? The revelation of the mystery is that God is not just the God of the Jews, but He is the God of the world. He wants all of the world. That Jesus didn't die just to reconcile the Jewish nation, that Jesus died to reconcile all nations.

[32 : 26] That's the mystery. The mystery throughout the Old Testament is that God is not the God of just one people. God is the God of all peoples. It is not that God just chose Abram out of the land of the Ur of the Chaldeans. It's that God chose Abram out of the land of the Ur of the Chaldeans so that He could show all the world what He is like so that all the world could be welcomed into His presence.

And that is a great mystery. And it is a mystery throughout the Old Testament that God didn't just want some, God want it all. And it has been revealed through the teaching of Scripture. So according to the gospel, according to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of that mystery that now we know God loves me, God loves you.

God doesn't just love the Jews, God loves the Gentiles as well. That God didn't just want Abram, He wants you and He wants me. That is the revelation of the mystery. And according to the Scriptures, according to the commandments of the eternal God, you know God made a commandment and God said this is how I'm going to do it to begin with, this is how I'm going to do it to end with, this is how I'm going to do it.

And when God says He's going to do it, guess what? God is going to do it. And when Jesus said upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against my church. My church will last.

That was a commandment of God coming through the Son of God who is Jesus Christ. And guess what? The gates of hell cannot come against the offensive nature of the church and the church busts through the gates and destroys the dark places of hell and nothing can stop the church because it has been eternally commanded by a faithful God.

[33 : 51] We see here that the security of the church does not find itself in the security of the individuals. Rather it finds its eternal security in the very presence of its almighty God.

It finds its eternal security in the very promises of the word of God. And friend we find that the church does not remain faithful because the people are good enough. We find that the church remains faithful because God loves enough.

We find that the church will not fail because Jesus' death was enough. We find that the church cannot fail because the promises of God are sure enough. We find that the church cannot fail not because we will someday get it all together is because he's already put it all together.

We see the eternal security of the church does not rest in our faithfulness because Paul says when I am faithless, what? You are faithful still. Friend, I don't know where your position in the church stands.

Maybe you think you're okay because you've sat in the same pew all these years or you've attended the same place of worship all these years. I just want to tell you right now that does not make you okay. You are okay because Jesus died for you.

[34 : 55] He loves you. He cares for you. And the mystery of scripture is that he wants you and he's done whatever it'll take to get you. And once he's got you, friend, listen to me, he'll never let go. And as that song says, no, he'll never let go.

What a beautiful place it is. The security of the church does not rest in the efforts of man because guess what? This man will fail you.

But it rests in the faithfulness of God. My brother said he's standing up here this morning and wasn't afraid to tell you that he was a nervous wreck. I want to tell you something. Last Sunday when I preached at Art City Community Church, there were probably 15 members of that church, not 15 attenders of that church.

Your pastor was a nervous wreck. I was away from the pulpit that I was accustomed to and I was standing behind a little platform. They put a microphone on me and told me they were going to video me.

I was tore up from the floor up, so to say. I sweat and it was cold in that room. I'm sweating now, but that's different. I always sweat here. I was so nervous.

[36 : 07] But I'm so thankful that the security of the church does not even rest in my own ability. But it rests in the very promises of God.

I don't know what you've given your life to. I know the book of Romans tells us that you'll never do enough to deserve his love. But he's already extended it to you.

I know it tells us that all of your works, all of your good deeds are like filthy rags. God doesn't even want your good things in his presence because they're not good enough.

But the blood of Christ will cause you to stand in his presence. I know the book of Romans tells us that if we'll just accept him by faith, he's already welcomed us into his presence.

And when he does that, he puts us into the body of Christ that is so beautiful, so magnificent, will rise victorious and is always, always eternal.

[37 : 16] You are a part of something that cannot fail. You are part of something that will not fail. I challenge you. I challenge you. And I'm just speaking to you now as your pastor.

Speaking to you now as a believer. Look at your life. I mean, take an honest look at your life. Just stop and think about it. And think about how many things in your life are really eternal.

I mean, hear me out. If you don't hear anything else, just listen to this. How many things in your life are eternal? I mean, that even death cannot take them away. And then ask yourself one more question.

What percentage of my efforts do I give to the eternal? And what percentage do I give to the temporal?

The only thing in my life that is eternal is the fact that I am a part of the church because of the death, burial, and resurrection of my Lord and Savior who is Jesus Christ.

[38 : 27] I mean, it's eternal. I love my wife dearly. Working on 21 years. As much as I wrestle with it, as much as I like to try to explain it away, the scripture says that in eternity you're neither given in marriage nor taken in marriage.

I hope that her mansion is beside my broom closet in heaven. Maybe my broom closet will be in her mansion in heaven. I don't know because I'm, you know, I know they say we don't necessarily need food and water, but I'll starve if I don't have some cooking in heaven.

It says that there are some things that I cling to right now that are not eternal. But the church, the bride of Christ, it's eternal.

And when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, He made me a part of something that will never, ever, ever stop.

And that's good news. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you so much for this day. God, I rejoice in all you've done.

[39 : 38] I rejoice in the work you accomplish in our lives. God, I ask now that you would just take this word and help it to speak to us, each as individuals. Lord, help us to understand more of you.

Lord, help us to see more of our, our lives, our hearts. And God, may we be given completely to you for your glory. Whatever it is you're asking us to do. Maybe there's one who's never really accepted you as Lord and Savior.

Maybe they're not even a member of the church because they're not a part of the bride of Christ. God, I pray that you'd break their hearts. Lord, maybe some of us, Lord, need to say, Lord, I know who I am in you and I want to live that out in a greater way.

Or whatever it is you're calling us to do. Lord, may you be glorified and honored through every decision made. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[42 : 03] Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[44 : 34] Thank you.

Thank you.